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SUBJECT: GABON MISCELLANY

11. CHINESE PRESENCE/PRESENTS. On June 26, the Gabonese Minister of Public Construction and the Minister of Telecommunication visited the construction site of the new national radio and television-broadcasting center being built by the PRC in Gabon. Construction began on this project in 12005. The massive 34,000 sq. ft. three-building complex will house forty-two offices, two television studios, and three radio stations. The PRC is scheduled to hand over the center to Gabonese authorities by the end of the year.

12. JOURNALIST ARRESTED. On June 28, the publisher of the independent newspaper L'Espoir was taken into custody on charges of illegally concurrently serving as a civil servant and member of the press. "Coincidentally", his arrest followed the publication of his article entitled, "The Last Days of Bongo." He remains in custody.

13. VISA AGREEMENT BETWEEN FRANCE AND GABON. On July 5, French Minister for Immigration Brice Hortefeux and Vice Prime Minister Jean Ping signed an agreement which will ease travel restrictions for Gabonese wishing to work or study in France, and will also ease residency requirements for French citizens living in Gabon.

14. AIRTRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' STRIKE. On June 29, the air traffic controller's agency (ASECNA) went on strike, halting both departures and arrivals at the airports in Libreville and Port Gentil. Press reports indicate that ASECNA employees were protesting the granting of undeserved bonuses to executives and not being paid. A non-governmental source indicated that the executives that received the bonuses are Gabonese citizens in nominal supervisory roles, while the majority of the employees that have not been paid in over 6 months are non-Gabonese. The issue was resolved by the evening, and flights resumed their normal schedules.

WALKLEY